

complice the goode werkes in the whiche he purposeth fermely to continue. Thanne comth seuretee, or sikernes; and that is, whan a man ne douteth no travaille in tyme comyng of the goode werkes that a man hath bigonne. Thanne comth magnificence, that is to seyn, whan a man dooth and perfourneth grete werkes of goodnesse that he hath bigonne; and that is the ende why that men sholde do goode werkes; for in the accomplissyng of grete goode werkes lith the grete guerdoun. Thanne is ther constaunce, that is stablesse of corage; and this sholde been in herte by stedefast feith, and in mouth, and in beryng, and in chiere, and in dede. Eke ther been mo speziale remedies agains accidie, in diverse werkes, & in consideracioun of the peynes of helle, and of the joyes of hevne, and in trust of the grace of the Holy Goost, that wole yewe hym myght to perfourne his goode entente.

Sequitur de Avaricia.

AFTER accidie wol I speke of avarice and of covetise, of which synne seith Seint Paule: that The roote of alle harmes is covetise: Ad Thimotheum, sexto capitulo. for soothly, whan the herte of a man is confounded in itself, and troubled, and that the soule hath lost the confort of God, thanne seketh he an ydel solas of worldly thynges.

AVARICE, after the descripcion of Seint Augustyn, is likerousnesse in herte to have erthely thynges. Som oother folk seyn, that avarice is, for to purchacen manye erthely thynges, and no thyng yewe to hem that han nede. And understood, that avarice ne stant nat oonly in lond ne catel, but somtyme in science & in glorie, & in every manere of outrageous thyng is avarice and covetise. And the difference bitwix avarice and covetise is this. Covetise is for to covete swiche thynges as thou hast nat; and avarice is for to witholde & kepe swiche thynges as thou hast, withoute rightful nede. Soothly, this avarice is a synne that is ful dampnable; for al hooly writ curseth it, & speket agayns that vice; for it dooth wrong to Jhesu Crist. for it bireveth hym the love that men to hym owen, and turneth it bakward agayns alle resoun; and maketh that the avaricious man hath moore hope in his catel than in Jhesu Crist, and dooth moore observance in keypyng of his tresor than he dooth to service of Jhesu Crist. And therefore seith Seint Paul, ad Ephesios quinto, that An avaricious man is in the thraldom of ydolatrie. What difference is betwix an ydolastre and an avaricious

man, but that an ydolastre, peraventure, ne hath but o mawmet or two, and the avaricious man hath manye? For certes, every floryn in his cofre is his mawmet. And certes, the synne of mawmettrie is the firste maundment, as bereth witness Exodus, capitulo xx: Thou shalt have no false goddes bfore me, ne thou shalt make thee no grave thyng. Thus is an avaricious man, that loveth his tresor bifrom God, an ydolastre, thurgh this cursed synne of avarice.

Of covetise comen thise harde lordshipes, thurgh whiche men been distreyned by taylages, custumes, and cariages, moore than hire due to resoun is. And eek they taken of hire bondemen amerciments, whiche myghten moore resonably ben cleped extorciouns than amerciments. Of whiche amerciments and raunsomyng of bondemen, somme lordes stywardes seyn, that it is rightful; forasmuche as a cherl hath no temporel thyng that it ne is his lordes, as they seyn. But certes, thise lordshipes doon wrong, that bireven hire bondefolk thynges that they nevere yave hem. Augustinus de Civitate Dei, libro nono. Sooth is, that the condicioun of thraldom, and the firste cause of thraldom is for synne. Genesis nono. Thus may ye seen that the gilt disserneth thraldom, but nat nature. Wherefore thise lordes ne sholde nat muche glorifyn hem in hir lordshipes, sith that by naturel condicioun they been nat lordes of thralles; but that thraldom comth first by the desert of synne. And fortherover, theras the lawe seith, that temporel goodes of bondefolk been the goodes of hir lordshipes, yee that is for to understonde, the goodes of the emperour, to defenden hem in hir right, but nat for to robben hem ne reven hem. And therefore seith Seneca: Thy prudence sholde lyve benignely with thy thralles. Thilke that thou clepest thy thralles been Goddes peple; for humble folk been Cristes freendes; they been contubernyal with the Lord. Thynk eek, that of swich seed as cherles spryngeth, of swich seed spryngeth lordes. As wel may the cherl be saved as the lord. The same deeth that taketh the cherl, swich deeth taketh the lord. Wherefore I rede, do right so with thy cherl, as thou woldest that thy lord dide with thee, if thou were in his plit. Every synful man is a cherl to synne. I rede thee, certes, that thou, lord, werke in swiche wise with thy cherles, that they rather love thee than drede. I woot wel ther is degree above degree, as reson is; and skile it is, that men do hir devoir theras it is due; but certes, extorciouns & despit of youre underlynges is dampnable.

AND fortherover understood well that thise conquerours, or tiraunts maken ful of te thralles of hem that been born of as roial blood as been they that hem conqueren. This name of thraldom was nevere erst knowth, til that Noe seyde, that his sone Canaan sholde be thral to his bretheren for his synne. What seye we thanne of hem that pilen & doon extorciouns to hooly chirche? Certes, the swerd, that men yeven first to a knyght whan he is newe dubbed, signifieth that he sholde defenden hooly chirche, and nat robben it ne pilen it; and whoso dooth, is traitour to Crist. And, as seith Seint Augustyn: They been the develes wolves, that stranglen the sheep of Jhesu Crist; and doon worse than wolves. For soothly, whan the wolf hath ful his wombe, he stynteth to strangle the sheep. But soothly, the pilours and destroyours of Goddes hooly chirche ne do nat so; for they ne stynte nevere to pile.

As I have seyde, sith so is that synne was first cause of thraldom, thanne is it thus; that thilke tyme that al this world was in synne, thanne was al this world in thraldom and subjeccioun. But certes, sith the time of grace cam, God ordeyned that som folk sholde be moore heigh in estaat and in degree, and som folk moore lough, and that everich sholde be served in his estaat and in his degree. And therefore, in somme contrees ther they byen thralles, whan they han turned hem to the feith, they maken hire thralles free out of thraldom. And therefore, certes, the lord oweth to his man that the man oweth to his lord. The pope calleth hymself servaunt of the servaunts of God; but forasmuche as the estaat of hooly chirche ne myghte nat han be, ne the commune profit myghte nat han be kept, ne pees and reste in erthe, but if God hadde ordeyned that som men hadde hyer degree & som men lower: therfore was sovereyntee ordeyned to kepe and mayntene and defenden hire underlynges or hire subgetts in resoun, as ferforth as it lith in hire power; & nat to destroyen hem ne confounde.

WHEREFORE I seye, that thilke lordes that been lyk wolves, that devouren the possessiouns or the catel of povre folk wrongfully, withouten mercy or mesure, they shul receyven, by the same mesure that they han mesured to povre folk, the mercy of Jhesu Crist, but if it be amended. Now comth deceite bitwix marchaunt and marchaunt. And thou shalt understonde, that marchaundise is in two maneres; that oon is bodily, & that oother is goostly. That oon is honeste and leveful, and that oother is deshoneste & unleveful. Of thilke bodily marchaundise, that is leveful and honeste,

is this; that, thereas God hath ordeyned that a regne or a contree is suffisaunt to hymself, thanne is it honeste and leveful, that of habundaunce of this contree, that men helpe another contree that is moore nedy. And therefore, ther moote been marchants to bryngen fro that o contree to that oother hire marchandises.

THAT oother marchaundise, that men haunten with fraude and trecherie & deceite, with lesynges & false othes, is cursed and dampnable. Espiritueel marchaundise is proprely symonye, that is, ententif desir to byen thyng espiritueel, that is, thyng that aperteneth to the seintuarie of God & to cure of the soule. This desir, if so be that a man do his diligence to parfournen it, albeit that his desir ne take noon effect, yet is it to hym a deedly synne; and if he be ordred, he is irreguleer. Certes, symonye is cleped of Simon Magus, that wolde han boght, for temporel catel, the yifte that God hadde yeven, by the hooly Goost, to Seint Peter and to the Apostles. And therefore understood, that bothe he that selleth and he that beyeth thynges espirituels, been cleped Symonys; be it by catel, be it by procuryng, or by flesshly preyere of his freendes, flesshly freendes, or espiritueel freendes, flesshly in two maneres; as by kynrede, or othere freendes. Soothly, if they praye for hym that is nat worthy and able, it is symonye, if he take the benefice; and if he be worthy and able, ther nys noon.

THAT oother manere is, whan a man or womman preyen for folk to avauncen hem, oonly for wikked flesshly affectioun that they have unto the persone; and that is foul symonye. But certes, in service, for which men yeven thynges espirituels unto hir servants, it moot been understonde that the servicemoot been honeste, and elles nat; and eek that it be withouten bargaynyng, and that the persone be able. for, as seith Seint Damascie: Alle the synnes of the world, at regard of this synne, am as thyng of noght; for it is the gretteste synne that may be, after the synne of Lucifer and Antecrist. for by this synne, God forleseth the chirche, and the soule that he boghte with his precious blood, by hem that yeven chirches to hem that been nat digne. for they putten in theves, that stelen the soules of Jhesu Crist and destroyen his patrimoyne. By swiche undigne preestes and curates han lewed men the lasse reverence of the sacraments of hooly chirche; & swiche yeveres of chirches putten out the children of Crist, & putten into the chirche the develes owene sone. They sellen the soules that lambes sholde kepen, to the wolf that stranglen hem. And therefore shul they nevere han